

Conclusions

Here we present the conclusions from the results outlined in each of the 6 major sections of the report. Major findings can be found in the Study Highlights portion found at the beginning of this report.

Awareness and Concerns About Chronic Wasting Disease

Overall, landowners are more concerned about the health of the deer herd and the future of deer hunting in Wisconsin than they are about their own personal health due to CWD.

Information About CWD

The majority of landowners say they trust the Wisconsin DNR when addressing CWD related issues. However, mean scores for trust are not very high, indicating that landowners may be skeptical about the Wisconsin DNR's CWD management actions.

Landowners in the DEZ continue to be interested in CWD; one-third say they follow CWD news "a lot."

Landowners obtain CWD information from a variety of sources. Their preferred sources for CWD information are the Wisconsin DNR newsletter, Madison and Milwaukee newspapers, and Wisconsin DNR publications.

Landowners would like to receive more information on possible human safety risks and possible livestock health risks associated with CWD.

Landowner Perception of the Deer Herd

Most landowners believe that prior to the discovery of CWD, the deer population on their land was remaining stable or perhaps increasing; a majority says the deer population on their land was at a proper level.

Support for and Effect of Disease Control Measures

More landowners are satisfied than dissatisfied with the job the Wisconsin DNR is doing managing CWD. On a grading scale of A to F, two-fifths of the landowners give the Wisconsin DNR a grade of B or higher; only 15 percent give the Wisconsin DNR a grade of C- or lower. This finding is consistent with results from other Wisconsin CWD studies.

Most landowners are aware of the incentives for harvesting more deer. Landowner-hunters have a higher level of awareness than landowners that do not hunt.

Landowners believe that increasing the CWD-positive incentive from \$200 to \$500 would likely increase the number of hunters asking permission to hunt their land. Few landowners said it would encourage them to allow more hunters on their land. Likewise, a slight majority of landowners say that increasing the lottery payment from \$20 to \$50 would increase the number of hunters asking permission to hunt their land. Few landowners say it would encourage them to allow more hunters on their land.

Support for monetary incentives differs depending on whether the landowner is a hunter or not. The largest group of hunters is opposed to any monetary incentive, while the largest group of non-hunters most prefers the \$500 reward for having a CWD-positive deer shot on his/her land.

Consensus on a gun deer hunting season most preferred by DEZ landowners is not found. The largest block of landowners would prefer a gun deer hunting season other than the alternatives listed in the questionnaire. About three landowners in ten prefer a gun deer season in the DEZ that started in late October and ended January 3rd.



Little support is found for the use of sharpshooters to help reduce the deer herd. A majority of landowners do not think sharpshooters should be used to help reduce the deer population in the DEZ. Further, three-fourths of the landowners say they would not allow sharpshooters on their land. However, despite this conclusion, opportunities to increase sharpshooting efforts exist. One-fourth of the landowners say they would provide sharpshooter access to their land. This equates to approximately 2,000 landowners (currently the Wisconsin DNR is using sharpshooters only on properties where landowners have given permission). Survey results also suggest that renewed efforts should target non-hunting landowners. Compared to landowners that hunt, non-hunting landowners are significantly more amicable to using sharpshooters for herd reduction and also more likely to provide access to their land. It must be noted, however, that when landowners were questioned about providing sharpshooter access to their land, it is likely that those who said “probably”, are awaiting answers to the question identified in major finding #1 (see page 6): “How has landowner participation contributed to the eradication efforts and where would the disease be without intervention?”

Neither hunter nor non-hunter landowners report any substantial change in the use of their land for deer hunting by others. Only a small percentage of landowners say that since CWD was found in Wisconsin they have seen an increase in the number of hunters trespassing on their land and asking for permission to hunt their land.

A majority of landowners say they would be willing to allow more deer to be killed on their property if they thought it would help to eradicate CWD from Wisconsin and if the deer could be donated to a food pantry. Please note that in 2003 the state had yet to establish a venison donation program.

The 2003 Deer Hunting Season

Landowners that are hunters dominate the southwest DEZ. Among landowners that hunt deer a majority is hoping to take a buck. However, an even larger proportion is hoping to or willing to take an antlerless deer.

Seventeen issues that could threaten the future of deer hunting in Wisconsin were presented in this study and no issue is considered an “extreme” threat. The three greatest perceived threats are: CWD, the decreasing amount of public land available for deer hunting, and the difficulty obtaining access to private land.

Ten percent self-described hunters did not hunt deer during the 2003 seasons. Almost half of the hunters who elected not to hunt during 2003 reported that CWD played some role in their decision (e.g., health concerns from the disease or objections with CWD management policies).

Land Ownership and Personal Background

Landowners were found to own an average of 95 acres of land and have owned that land for an average of 19 years. They have lived in the DEZ county for an average of 34 years and about one-third of the landowners could be considered absentee-landowners. Almost all respondents say the land they own in the DEZ is at least partly farmed.

